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Message Text

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45
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 AID-05

OMB-01 OC-05 CCO-00 SCCT-01 DHA-02 ORM-02 EB-07 /104 W
---------- 109940
O R 051445Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7965
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NY
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK
COMMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
DIA WASHDC
CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 72

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE
SUBJECT: PRECARIOUS CALM HOLDS; POLITICAL MANEUVERS CONTINUE

REF BEIRUT 0029 (1124Z)

1. SUMMARY: BEIRUT HAS BEEN GENERALLY CALM, BUT KIDNAP-
PINGS ARE NUMEROUS AND CONFRONTATION BETWEEN KATAEB AND
PALESTINIANS OVER SUPPLIES FOR TEL ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP HAS
EXPLOSIVE POTENTIAL. AFTER INCREASING DURING WEEKEND,
BEIRUT COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY IS LIGHT TODAY, JAN 5. MARONITE
PATRIARCH KHREISH IS ONCE AGAIN A CONSPICUOUS FORCE FOR
MODERATION. END SUMMARY

2. ALTHOUGH BEIRUT RADIO REPORTED EARLY MONRING JAN 5 THAT
BEIRUT WAS GENERALLY QUIET, IT NOTED THAT CAPITAL AREA ROADS
WERE PRECARIOUS BECAUSE OF KIDNAPPINGS. MORE THAN 40
PEOPLE HAD BEEN KIDNAPPED OVER THE WEEKEND, AND RETALIATORY
ABDUCTIONS AT MOBILE ROADBLOCKS WERE CONTINUING MONDAY
MORNING. TOGETHER WITH CONTINUED PREVALENCE OF COMMON
BANDITRYY IN SOME QUARTERS, THIS DEVELOPMENT CREATING
JITTERY ATMOSPHERE DESPITE RELATIVE CALM. ALSO DISTURBING
IS MOVE BY KATAEB JAN 4 TO BLOCK SUPPLIES MOVING INTO TEL
ZAATAR REFUGEE CAMP IN EASTERN SUBURBS. KATAEB REPORTEDLY
DISCOVERED GUNS UNDERNEATH FOOD PRODUCTS ON TRUCKS HEADED
FOR CAMP AND TOOK ACTION ACCORDINGLY. WHETHER OR NOT THIS
TRUE, REACTION OF PALESTINIANS HAS BEEN SHARP, WITH ARAFAT
GIVING MATTER PERSONAL ATTENTION. AGREEMENT REACHED LATE
JAN 4 ON ARRANGEMENT TO GO INTO EFFECT TODAY WHEREBY TRUCKS
WOULD ENTER CAMP. AS OF LAST REPORT, IMPLEMENTATION OF
THIS ACCORD UNCERTAIN AND AFFAIR IS CURRENT MAJOR DANGER
POINT IN CAPITAL.

3. TRIPOLI REGION HAS WITNESSED CLASHES, NOTABLY ATTACK BY
MOSLEM GUNMEN ON JAIL NEAR THAT CITY FREEING SOME PRISONERS,
BUT GENERALLY SITUATION IN THAT AREA IS SATISFACTORY. ZAHLE
REPORTS A "PRECARIOUS CALM".

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4. AFTER INCREASING OVER THE WEEKEND, COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY
IN BEIRUT IS LIGHT AGAIN TODAY. BANKS IN BEIRUT, NOW CLOSED
FOR OVERFIVE WEEKS, REITERATED THAT THEY WILL REMAIN CLOSED
UNTIL SECURITY IMPROVES: BANKS IN SIDON AND TRIPOLI HAVE
BEEN OCCASIONALLY OPEN AS SECURITY CONDITIONS PERMITTED.
OIL MINISTER TUEINI OVER WEEKEND FORMALIZED DEFACTO
GASOLINE HEATING OIL SUPPLY ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS
BY FORMING COMMITTEE OF GOVT OFFICIALS AND

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MARKETERS. AS FIRST ORDERS OF BUSINESS COMMITTEE IS ATTEMTPING TO WORK OUT DETAILS OF DRIVER RELAY SYSTEM TO ALLOW IPC REFINERY IN TRIPOLI TO SUPPLY BEIRUT AND TO ALLOW DISTRIBUTION WITHIN BEIRUT. PANAM, KLM, LUFTHANSA INTEND TO RESUME SOME BEIRUT SERVICE THIS WEEK UNLESS SECURITY DETERIORATES.

5. MARONITE PATRIARCH KHREISH EMERGING AGAIN AS IMPORTANT FORCE FOR POLITICAL RECONCILIATION AT TIME WHEN SOME OTHER MARONITE LEADERS ARE ADOPTING CONSPICUOUSLY HARD LINE. HE RECEIVED RAYMOND EDDE AT THE BKERKE PATRIARCHATE JAN 4. AND DECLARED LATE THAT "WE WORK TO REGROUP ALL THE FORCES OF THE NATION". EDDE, WHO HAS HABITUALLY KEPT HIS DISTANCE FROM THE HARD-LINERS EXPRESSED A SIMILAR VIEW AFTER THE MEETING. NEITHER OF THESE TWO LEADERS HAD BEEN AT THE DEC 31 MARONITE MEETING THAT HAD FORMULATED THE HARDINING LINE (BEIRUT 15727 AND 0020). SOME SOURCES EXPECT KHREISH TO FORM A "MODERATE MARONITE FRONT".

6. SPECULATION ABOUNDS ON REASON FOR RECENT TOUGHENING AMONG MARONITES. CURRENT FAVORITE IN BEIRUT PARLOR DISCUSSIONS IS THAT IRAQ--IN PERSON OF INFORMATION MINISTER TARIQ AZIZ (A CHRISTIAN) WHO RECENTLY VISITED LEBANON--DELIVERATLEY ENCOURAGED FIRMER LINE AMONG CHRISTIANS. THEORY IS THAT IRAQ WISHED TO TORPEDO SYRIAN MEDIATION EFFORT. THUS, SYRIA AND IRAQ ARE ACCUSED OF PURSUING THEIR RIVALRY INSIDE LEBANON. WE HAVE NO PROOF OF THIS CHARGE AND BELIEVE IT SAYS AS MUCH ABOUT BEIRUT POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY AS IT DOES ABOUT IRAQ AND SYRIA.
GODLEY

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